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ABSTRACT

Intended to assist English teachers of junior high gifted students whose mental ability is in the top 2% of all students, the publication explores certain aspects of the California English curriculum and identifies possible directions in English instruction, in which approaches are based upon curricular developments emphasizing the process of inquiry. Both techniques and content in the study of English usage are examined. Increasing the relevance of course content is seen to be possible through thematic or generic structuring of content based on significant works of literature and by concern with communication in all its forms and via all media. Discovery methods similar to those used in newer physical science courses are recommended, as are communications or media laboratories, for promoting an inductive study of language in all its forms of communication and for relating course content to the needs of gifted students in this age and to the development of high-level skills. (KW)

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Teaching Gifted Students English Usage in Grades Seven Through Nine

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Teaching Gifted Students English Usage in Grades Seven Through Nine

Prepared for the

DIVISION OF SPECIAL EDUCATION
California State Department of Education

by

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FOREWORD

The public schools of California are charged with providing ample opportunity for every girl and boy of school age to become knowledgeable in the basic subjects and proficient in using the basic skills of learning. It is equally important that the educational programs offered by the schools be of sufficient scope and depth to permit each young person to learn at the rate and to the full level that his ability permits.

In conducting educational programs, the schools are responsible for adopting practices that are flexible enough to allow whatever adjustments are required to meet each student's need of special education. The talented are among those for whom such adjustments are necessary. Recently the State Department of Education directed and coordinated a federally funded project for the development of curriculum materials of the type needed for the education of gifted children and youth. The materials, which reflect the best thinking of people who are well qualified both by education and by experience, are innovative and professional.

This publication, one of a series, is concerned with the teaching of English usage to mentally gifted students in grades seven through nine. Not only teachers but also administrators, consultants, and other professional personnel who are interested or involved in helping talented minors are invited to examine it. The concepts and suggestions contained in it merit thoughtful consideration.

Max Rafferty

Superintendent of Public Instruction

PREFACE

This publication, which was planned and completed as part of a project under provisions of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, Title V, is intended to assist teachers of mentally gifted students whose general mental ability is in the top 2 percent of all girls and boys. It is also recommended for use by administrators, consultants, and other professional personnel who are involved in helping talented minors in California schools.

Teaching Gifted Students English Usage in Grades Seven Through Nine is one of a series of curriculum materials that are designed for the following educational levels: grades one through three, four through six, seven and eight, and nine through twelve. Consideration is also given to curriculum content at the kindergarten level. These materials were prepared under the direction of Mary N. Meeker, Associate Professor of Education, University of Southern California, and James Magary, Associate Professor of Educational Psychology, University of Southern California.

Also developed as part of this project is a series of curriculum guides for use in the teaching of eight subject areas to mentally gifted minors in elementary and secondary schools. The guides include practical suggestions regarding approaches and techniques that might be used to advantage in particular subject fields. These materials were prepared under the direction of John C. Gowan, Professor of Education, and his assistant, Joyce Sonntag, Assistant Professor of Education, both of San Fernando Valley State College.

A curriculum framework designed for use in developing programs for mentally gifted minors in California schools was developed during the course of the project. This major document, also prepared under the supervision of Dr. Meeker and Dr. Magary, is concerned chiefly with the objectives, principles, and curricula that should be given close attention in planning and implementing programs for mentally gifted children and youth.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

"Never in our history have we stood in such desperate need of men and women of intelligence, imagination, and courage. The challenge is there – greater than any generation has ever faced."[1] John W. Gardner, former Secretary, U. S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare, published these words shortly before his appointment to the Cabinet. In *Excellence: Can We Be Equal and Excellent Too?* he wrote that excellence implies more than competence, that it implies a striving for the highest standards in every phase of life. He appealed to Americans to keep their society dynamic and deeply motivated. Gardner wrote, further:

> Free men must set their own goals. There is no one to tell them what to do; they must do it for themselves. They must be quick to apprehend the kinds of effort and performance their society needs, and they must demand that kind of effort and performance of themselves and of their fellows.[2]

English teachers who seek ways of helping each student to develop intelligence, imagination, and courage will discover much in our technological society that demands of them that they set new and expanded goals for instruction.

Recognizing that America's educational systems often do not meet the needs of the young realistically, a California blue-ribbon citizens' committee claimed only a few years ago that many students, instead of thinking for themselves, learn to regurgitate statements believed to be "safe" answers. The State Committee on Public Education (SCPE), whose members were nominated in 1966 by the California State Board of Education, made a 17-month study to survey future needs of California's educational system and was appalled to note the rigid thought processes being displayed by a large number of learners. The report of the committee, *Citizens for the 21st Century*, finds it necessary that some of the discovery methods inherent in newer concepts developed for physical science courses be infused into all elements of education. Traditional schooling is sharply scored as

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[1] John W. Gardner, *Excellence: Can We Be Equal And Excellent Too?* Harper Colophon Books. New York: Harper & Row Pubs., 1961, p. 153.

[2] *Ibid.*, p. 161.

being tired, as failing to waken and motivate the student, as having a hurtful curriculum imbalance, and as relying too heavily on the so-called "teacher-tell and textbook" method of instruction. Conventional approaches in teaching and learning are inadequate to prepare children and youth for the unpredictable demands of the present as well as for the more unpredictable ones of the future.[3]

This publication, then, is concerned with finding answers to the following questions:

- What are the discovery methods of the new concepts that are being applied in physical science courses?
- How can such methods be introduced into the study of English?

In its involvement with these concerns, this contribution will deal with English usage as it affects the lives of early adolescents, not only in their school situation but in their total environment.

Inquiry Techniques in "the Discovery Method"

Over the past decade a nationwide curriculum reform has occurred in the teaching of science and mathematics. Michael Wolff, associate editor of a major periodical dealing with science and technology, describes how the new science courses provide methods and materials with which students can involve themselves in a *process of inquiry* akin to the way science is actually practiced.[4] Not only future scientists but all future citizens will benefit from the dozens of experimental courses that have been developed to give young people a basic understanding of science and technology in relation to the rest of our culture.

In the new science approaches, specialized textbooks have been updated for appropriate use, and textbooks of the more general type have been partially replaced with arrays of exciting teaching materials. A physics teacher today has available in his classroom new kinds of textbooks and teacher's guides as well as large numbers of films and paperbacks on supplementary topics ranging from accelerators and vector kinematics to considerations of the universe. He and his students, moreover, are able to conduct many laboratory experiments not of the cookbook variety, using such apparatus as stroboscopes and ripple tanks. Developers of new scientific courses have not only made them modern in the best sense but have also

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[3]*Citizens for the 21st Century: Long-Range Considerations for California Elementary and Secondary Education.* State Committee on Public Education. Sacramento: California State Department of Education, 1969.

[4]Michael F. Wolff, "Teaching Children Science," *International Science and Technology*, No. 65 (May, 1967), 26-38.

portrayed science as *an unfinished and continuing process of inquiry.* To accomplish this portrayal, broad coverage has been replaced with deeper development of fundamental ideas.

The concept that the textbook is to be treated as some grand authority whose pronouncements are nearly tantamount to commands has been reversed. Rather, the textbook is regarded more as a reference work to be used after the students have been introduced to topics through their own guided discoveries in open-ended exploratory laboratory sessions.

The new science curriculum reflects as much a change in teaching style as it does in content. The science teacher exchanges his role of authority for one in which (1) he is more of a consultant and helper than a trainer; (2) he asks questions rather than writes on chalkboards; and (3) he provokes thinking and excitement.

Gardner asserts that free men should be given opportunities to set their own goals. Wolff claims that the new science courses offer such opportunities. If these possibilities exist for science, what are the implications for English usage and the study of literature?

The New English Curriculum

During the summer of 1968, a new *English Language Framework for California Public Schools* was distributed by the California State Department of Education. The advisory committee responsible for this significant publication stated that "creative experimenting with the curriculum must proceed apace if the English program in the schools is to become truly effective."[5]

The present treatise, which focuses on gifted students in grades seven, eight, and nine, explores certain aspects of the English curriculum and identifies possible directions in English instruction; that is, if such approaches are to be based upon curricular developments in which the process of inquiry is emphasized.

The new approach to the study of English will continue to have the same basic objective this discipline has had for centuries: namely, that English is *an examination of the ways by which the ideas of one man can be communicated to others.*

However, the emphasis upon reading and writing, with occasional sorties into speaking, will no longer be sustained. Instead, communication laboratories may replace the books-paper-and-pen environs of today's English classes. In lieu of a fragmented approach to literature, with catch-as-catch-can studies of many literary works in

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[5] *English Language Framework for California Public Schools: Kindergarten Through Grade Twelve.* Prepared for the California State Board of Education and the California State Curriculum Commission by the California Advisory Committee for an English Language Framework. Sacramento: California State Department of Education, 1968, p.7.

relative isolation, young learners will study themes that have concerned mankind throughout the ages by examining a variety of statements and restatements of ideas conveyed by many authors.

Laboratories for Examining Verbal and Nonverbal Communication

The communication laboratories of the new English curriculum will likely be as well equipped as today's physics laboratories with their "stroboscopes and ripple tanks." Students will be asked (1) to determine what messages they receive from a given film, telecast, or radio program *(implication thinking);* and (2) to invent techniques for projecting similar messages *(divergent production).*

How music, sound, light, and color affect our reception of an idea will be studied, along with the role of speech in electronic media. Students will compare a message presented by a certain book with the same message conveyed through visual and aural methods. They will write their own scripts, both verbal and visual, and will determine by observation whether or not their messages come across. From a variety of media possibilities, they will choose that which is most appropriate for transmitting their thoughts and beliefs.

Let us suppose that the teacher assigns a student to a project whereby he must influence others to accept a given plan of operation. To accomplish the assignment, the student must determine what communication media he should adopt; whether the use of handbills should precede or follow radio bulletins; whether a television documentary would be more apt to inspire acceptance than would a newspaper series; and what audience would be more apt to receive the message if television were the medium chosen.

In short, the student will *do* communication rather than just read about it. By application of such techniques, he will become increasingly aware of his own response to various forms of communication media. Further, he will learn to recognize propaganda and will become more resistant to domination and exploitation. As a result of all this, his judgment will be honed upon the whetstone of the real world.

Great Themes in Literature

The study of English will be made relevant to youthful questions and concerns through a great-themes-in-literature approach. Broad coverage of many works will be sacrificed in favor of a deeper development of certain fundamental ideas. An examination of heroism, temptation, or ethics will provide a foundation upon which students may develop their own convictions. Segmentation and compartmentalization will yield to integration and unity, the latter

of which are identified today by many educators and writers as major objectives in the study of important literature. To accomplish the goals of literary study and exploration, students will use primary source materials whenever possible. As already implied, textbooks on the study of literature, like the new science textbooks, will play a greater role in serving as reference sources that can be used discriminately after students have been introduced to topics by teacher-guided methods and by their individual discoveries.

Implications for the Education of the Gifted

The approach that uses media laboratories and thematic studies, which are appropriate for all young people, probably will be initiated for students ranked in the upper fourth of their classes. In using this dual approach, ingenious teachers will surely discover that valuable elements of the new English curriculum can be adapted to the needs of "average" boys and girls.

The uniqueness of such a strategy lies in the fact that a curriculum using it can be adapted to other students besides the gifted, whereas the usual method until now has been to develop a curriculum for the average student and then attempt to enrich it for the gifted.

The exciting thing about this kind of educational involvement is that it appeals to the majority of youth – not just to the articulate, studious ones who would probably get by anyhow, but to the "hot-rod tinkerers," the creative ones, and the social leaders who might not otherwise achieve on a level commensurate with their potential. In an experimental English class for bright though underachieving students, held during the 1967-68 school year at Palos Verdes High School, Los Angeles County, similar techniques and content were used. The students helped to develop a workable "great themes" curriculum. One-third of the students "raised their average in classes other than English more than a full grade point."[6]

This document on English usage explores some of the ways in which gifted students may be led to "lay hands" on the stuff of communication, whether it is conveyed through modern electronic media or through the medium of classical literature. Perhaps by making English classes more relevant to students' lives, teachers can find new means of helping young people to be strong and self-respecting and to achieve the kinds of goals for which California's State Committee on Public Education and individuals like John Gardner have pled.

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[6]See Barbara L. Covey, "Tuning In and Turning On the Nonverbals," *American Education*, V (June-July, 1969), 10.

Chapter 2

Course Content: Its Relevance to Schools and Society

What kinds of ingredients belong to an English usage course for young gifted students? What are the needs of these youth at this time, in this environment, in this age, in this world? How shall content be related to needs? These are among the questions that this small publication seeks to explore in a realistic light.

The Total Environment – "A Vast Teaching Machine"

Our total environment can be described as a vast teaching machine. In previous generations the education of youth was felt to be the duty of the whole community. Only during the twentieth century have educators redefined education to mean only schooling.[1] Such a changed viewpoint is tragic in an era when the majority of high school graduates will have spent more hours at home in front of their television sets than in their classrooms. The mass media are emerging as educational instruments of profound importance. It is essential that curriculum planners keep the role of such media clearly in mind as they develop classroom objectives.

The Educating Society and the Early Adolescent

Students entering the seventh grade in 1969 were, for the most part, born in 1957. Their formative years were conditioned by visual and aural images received in their living rooms via the home television set. Barely walking when Russia lofted Sputnik, they had been in kindergarten about a month at the time of the Cuban crisis. Chances are that they not only observed their parents' reactions to the 6 p.m. news but also participated in at least one of a variety of so-called "alerts." Some of these children, while barely aware of the path to school, were herded together during emergency drills and sent home by their teachers. Undoubtedly, those who were bright little question askers needed reasons for such activities. Teachers and

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[1]Discussions of this shift in the thinking of educators can be found in various contemporary sources; for example, in Charles E. Silberman's book, *Crisis in Black and White*. New York: Random House, Inc., 1964.

parents tried to supply the reasons, but they found it difficult to explain events that were treated extensively on home TV screens.

The same group of boys and girls missed a day of schooling in the first grade one bleak weekend in November, 1963, when television networks dealt exclusively with the muffled drums and riderless horse of the John F. Kennedy funeral. This made a deep impression on all Americans, including the very young. At that particular time, six-year-olds probably missed the Winchell-Mahoney show and the 5:30 p.m. comics more than they missed Miss Smith's first-grade reading lesson.

In the month of March in their second grade, these young TV viewers watched white men in uniforms use cattle goads and whips to turn back a crowd of black men and women in Selma, Alabama. Miss Jones had taught the children that policemen are community helpers and our friends. The gifted, however, may have noted a dichotomy between Miss Jones' dittoed stencils of "Our Friend, the Policeman" and the telecasts showing the actions of the Alabama state troopers. Today boys and girls in the upper elementary grades are apt to refer to policemen more as "the fuzz" than as "our friends."

The impact derived from the Selma incident hardly compared with that received during August of that year. Not only did children in southern California watch television coverage of black men and boys looting and rioting, but also many children rode along the Harbor Freeway with their parents and saw, on either side, flames and smoke from the Watts riots. Did this early exposure condition advantaged children to a stereotyped concept of black people?

Youthful citizens who are in the eighth grade of 1970 were in the final days of their fifth grades when another Kennedy was shot. Most of them can remember and compare the two funerals. "Mine eyes have seen the glory of the coming of the Lord" will always be, for them, the litany that was sung as the funeral train passed through the Baltimore station. The sight of Bobby, Jr., helping carry his father's coffin to its final resting place in Arlington Cemetery is a very real part of their heritage.

Vietnam, the first fully covered war of the television era, brings individual human agony into the living rooms of the nation. Parents who look back on the American effort in World War II and in the Korean Conflict and deem that effort justifiable are surprised at the emotional commitment of today's teenagers for an end to the hostilities in Vietnam.

Need we marvel? Today's boys and girls have seen the tears of a tiny Vietnamese boy who watches his father being removed from the family houseboat by an American navy patrol and taken away for

internment as a Vietnamese army dodger. They have seen dead men in their very living rooms; they have seen men with torn and bleeding bodies. They know the awful price paid by inhabitants of a war-torn country for every advance made by the armies.

One gifted teenage girl commented, "My heart drops into my stomach every time there's a news breakthrough!" Today's youth live constantly on the ragged edge of potential disaster.

Youth Unrest

Older brothers and sisters of today's seventh-grade children are engaged in a nationwide and worldwide demand for *relevance* in their studies. Some people do not understand the reasons for student unrest, for protest marches, and for scholastic sit-ins. Adults must recognize that young people do not live in a vacuum, encompassed by those "safe" aspects of existence portrayed by the educational system itself.

Present-day students are the products of their total environment, and modern electronic communication media are part of that environment. Their concerns, as contrasted with those of previous generations, deal with the whole world, with all people, and with each individual's "thing." No longer can educators rely upon a prepackaged curriculum to transmit the culture, for today's boys and girls can see the culture changing with every daily news report. Even those students who do not join the marches and the demonstrations are confused by the many differences they think they see between the "real" world of their television screens and the archaic world they enter when they go through the doors of their schoolhouses.

During the spring of 1968, Dan Moore, educational director for the *Los Angeles Times,* spoke before numerous school and community groups and made the statements summarized in the two following paragraphs. Among the groups he addressed was the special class for underachieving gifted students at Palos Verdes High School, Los Angeles County.[2]

Adolescent boys and girls in 1970 are, quite literally, the first generation in a way of life unlike any that has preceded it. Of the four billion people alive on this planet today, more than half are under age twenty-seven. Most of them will be over eighty years of age before they die, unless starved during the 1970s because food production will have proved inadequate to serve the growing world population. How will this younger generation react to television's

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[2]Dan Moore, educational director for the *Los Angeles Times,* "The Generational Gap," lecture before the class of underachievers, Palos Verdes High School, Palos Verdes Estates, Calif., spring, 1968.

portrayal of starving multitudes in 1975 – to the sight of tens of thousands of African or Indian babies dying of malnutrition?

Economists tell us that over half of the jobs which will be taken by modern youth do not even exist as yet and that many of the jobs now available could be done, and done better, by machines now in production. A large number of jobs envisioned by high school students will be gone by the time they graduate. Those who find employment may have to be retrained at least three times during their work-lifetimes – as often as their occupations become obsolete.

In tomorrow's world, priority will be given to the man or woman who can invent a machine or program a machine. Tomorrow's jobs will be held by creative and communicative people: inventors, entertainers, educators, statesmen, problem solvers. With the increased use of technology and computers, the divergence between those who *plan* and those who *do* will become increasingly more evident.

Tomorrow's Planners and Problem Solvers

Today's gifted boys and girls will be needed desperately in the post-1970 world to help solve problems created by urban development, pollution, and overpopulation. Increasing value will be placed on the skills which they presently possess: the ability to detect a pattern within a series of apparently dissimilar facts; the intelligence and foresight needed to propose solutions to fact-encompassed problems; and the ability to communicate ideas, evaluate progress, and predict probable consequences.

Educators must not assume that gifted young people will perfect their problem-solving skills outside the classroom. Those present-day college students who can see a problem but have no other recourse than to join mass-protest movements exemplify a lack of ability to think clearly and steadily. The answers will come from those students who have been led to examine all possibilities of solving a problem and who have learned to develop a plan of action, to communicate their ideas, and to follow through with an objective evaluation. Where do today's students learn such techniques? If education is truly relevant to the needs of these young citizens, the techniques of planning and problem solving must be taught in the classroom.

Subject Matter: The Study of Communication

Individuals can develop a plan of action, but it takes knowledge of communication skills for those individuals to share their ideas with

others. Every breakthrough idea that ever existed was first promulgated by an individual or by a group of individuals. A computer, for example, is exactly as capable as the mind that programmed it, for a machine can communicate only those ideas which are fed into it by some man or woman. Even those marvels of electronic communication – television, films, and radio – are the visual and aural evidence of somebody's emotions and ideals. The man with an idea must have a medium or media through which to project it.

The communication of ideas, certainly, depends upon more than the written word. Although electronic communication skills are currently almost the exclusive province of advertising specialists and entertainers, these skills must be practiced, mastered, and used frequently by scientists, statesmen, sociologists, economists, and others who are able to help the human condition. Today's gifted students must be aware of their own potential impact as communicators who can make effective use of all communications media, not just the printed word.

"The American people have a great instrument within their grasp which they can turn to great purposes," the Carnegie Commission on Educational Television reported recently.[3] Calling for increased financial backing from all segments of society for educational television, the Commission remarked that "in the technologically most advanced society in the history of man, the greatest technological device for informing, delighting, inspiring, amusing, provoking, and entertaining remains pitiably unexploited, and the American public is the loser."[4]

The study of English must be expanded to the study of all types of communication. Since words are the means of cognitive exchange, even in such communications media as television and cinema, the role of English for sharing information and developing attitudes must be examined in all its specific forms, including the spoken word and the printed word.

Priorities for the Mentally Gifted

The English curriculum and the emphases of the course, including classroom time allotments, should vary for mentally gifted students. As they enter seventh grade, many gifted boys and girls will have perfected skills which teachers are still building among average or

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[3]"The Public Be Served: Television for All Tastes," *Carnegie Quarterly* (Carnegie Corporation of New York), XV (Winter, 1967), 1.

[4]*Ibid.*

slow students. Reading is one example. The following are typical comments made by parents of talented early adolescents:

> She has read every book on our shelves – including a few we might have hidden if we had realized what she was doing.
>
> He brings home armloads of books from the library every week. I honestly don't know when he gets the time, but apparently he goes through them all. At least he insists on going back for a new set every Friday.
>
> She seems to be reading something all the time. When she runs out of books, it's the magazines.
>
> Last summer he started on a project of reading his way through our encyclopedias.

The vast majority of gifted students have perfected by early adolescence the basic skills of reading, and they are able to take on almost anything they really want to read.

Because of the distinctive characteristics contained in the best educational program for the gifted, these young persons need considerable freedom and flexibility in their learning environment if they are to achieve to their highest potential. Administrative support is essential for teachers who are attempting such programs. There can be no mistake: *the gifted are different.* For example, let us imagine an "average" eighth grader being forced, by some science-fiction quirk of time and space, to assume the appearance of and to occupy the school desk of his "average" fourth-grade younger brother. Let us think of the older boy's impatience and dismay over the too-simple (for *him*) spelling words and the tedious (for *him*) arithmetic drill. Ah, there we have it! Activities and content that are entirely appropriate for most fourth graders are wrong for yon disguised eighth grader. So, too, are programs in the usual classroom wrong for gifted students.

It would be a major fallacy, however, for us to think of gifted eighth-grade boys and girls as disguised college students. They are, really, only a few steps removed from childhood. For the closest written approximation of their situation, one should examine Robert A. Heinlein's *Stranger in a Strange Land.*[5] In that book Valentine Michael Smith, a Martian, is obviously a very gifted individual. His problems of understanding and communicating with Earth people are akin to, though not exactly the same as, those of mentally gifted youth. It should be noted well that many bright young people identify strongly with Valentine Smith.

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[5]Robert A. Heinlein, *Stranger in a Strange Land.* New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1961. (Also available in paperback: A Berkley Medallion Book. New York: Berkley Publishing Corp., 1968.)

Self-definitions of Subject-Matter Depth

Not only do most gifted boys and girls form all-embrasive reading habits, but many of them, quite on their own and at an early age, start building a policy of seeking depth in subject matter. For a large number of the gifted, the years spent in the fifth and sixth grades were a time of series absorption. They were collectors. Some collected baseball cards; others, sea shells; and still others, stamps. Their reading paralleled the "collecting" habit. They read *all* of the Nancy Drew books, *all* of the Black Stallion series, and *all* of the Hardy Boys adventure stories. In the seventh grade many in the class will begin to read everything available on a particular *subject.* One will read every book he can find on the Civil War; another will read every source available on Mary, Queen of Scots. By the time they reach the ninth grade, many of the gifted will have read every book they can find by a given *author.* Favorite writers may include such personages as Ian Fleming, Robert A. Heinlein, Alistair MacLean, Mary Stewart, Helen MacInnis, Richard Armour, Arthur Clark, and Isaac Asimov.

By the same token the television-viewing habits of these young adolescents are of similar ilk. Instead of sitting glued to the set for an entire evening, as they did in earlier years, they now watch favorite programs with the eyes of connoisseurs. When they know they have missed a given program on "Star Trek," for instance, they are alert to the eventual rerun.

Those who collect record albums do so in the same spirit of totality. Some have every album recorded by the Beatles; others, every issue of Simon and Garfunkel. Further, they have their friends' collections well cataloged in their minds. "Oh, she collects the Doors," or "His thing is Bob Dylan."

Certain magazines receive a similar stamp of approval. Some gifted boys have collections of *Popular Mechanics* or *Popular Science* and can dig up information on how to construct a crystal radio or a model telegraph at an hour's notice. Others have several dozen copies of *Mad* magazine shelved in their closets. Teachers should beware: Boys often (and girls sometimes) quote liberally from "*Mad* Mag" in self-propelled humorous essays.

Many gifted students own collections of "comic" books, and there appears to be a built-in status position as to whether one collects *fantastic heroes* or *superheroes.* (Status is said to accrue to the collectors of the former rather than to those of the latter, on the basis of the more stylishly developed characterizations presented in *fantastic heroes.)*

Gifted boys and girls, moreover, are wont to collect and sometimes catalog information. Like fact-collecting pack rats, they store away information either physically or mentally and form habits that occasionally pose problems. One highly gifted student described his problem in this manner: "I feel as though I am swimming in a sea of information. There's so much that I know. I just can't seem to get it organized in my mind."

All these bents and tendencies on the part of talented young people show a predeliction for depth of subject matter. During their growing years, the trend is from collecting to selecting to probing. One of the most essential tasks in the teaching of gifted early adolescents is to capture and use to advantage this inclination toward in-depth learning.

Teaching the Information Collectors: Determining Classroom Emphases and Time Allotments

Similar to the system proposed by Benjamin S. Bloom and his associates, a taxonomy of educational tasks[6] is suggested for use in the curricula of both average and mentally gifted students. Such a development is highly germane to the substance and direction of course content. Between the educational processes involving the gifted and those involving the average learner, a difference in emphasis should be established. This difference and the elements thereof are shown in figures 1 and 2.

In the teaching of gifted students, percentages of time devoted to each major area of intellectual activity should be very nearly reversed from the emphasis demanded for average students; that is, since gifted learners are originally information gatherers and confirmers, relatively little instructional time needs to be spent on gathering and confirming. At this point in their development, these boys and girls need learning experiences at higher levels of intellectualization, such as those required by analysis, synthesis, and evaluation.

For average students, the curriculum should be built upon the broadest base of intellectual operations and should reflect the students' greatest need for mental development. The emphasis, then, for the average student should center upon the area of knowledge and information gathering, with the five other areas in Bloom's taxonomy receiving progressively smaller percentages of time.

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[6] *Taxonomy of Educational Objectives – Handbook I: Cognitive Domain.* Prepared by Benjamin S. Bloom and Others. New York: David McKay Co., Inc., 1956. See especially p. 18.

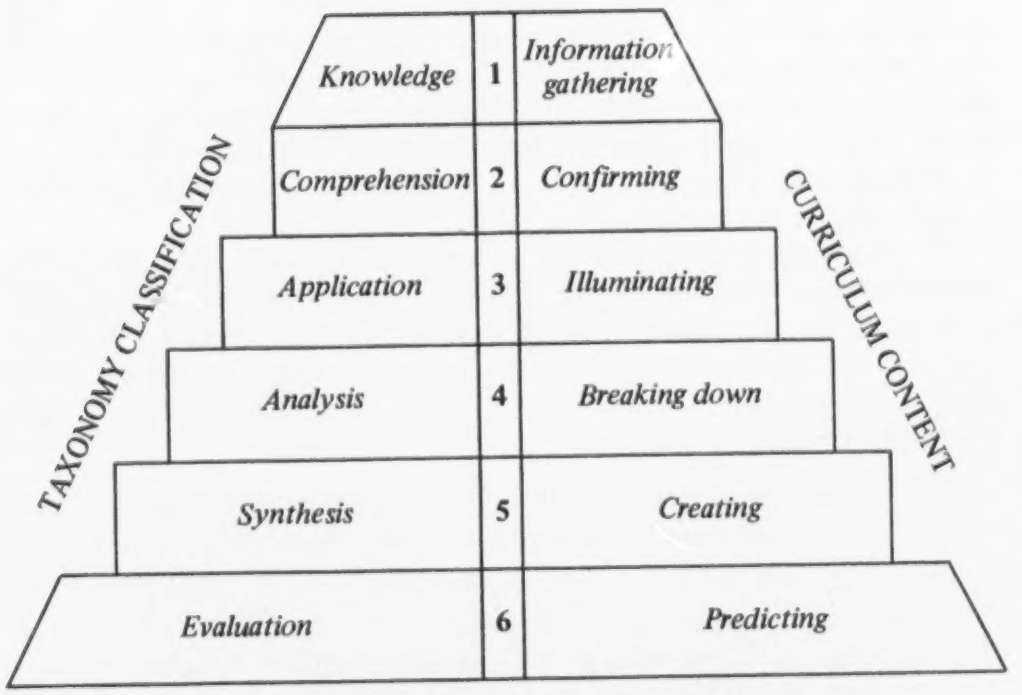

Figure 1. Classroom Emphasis for Mentally Gifted Students

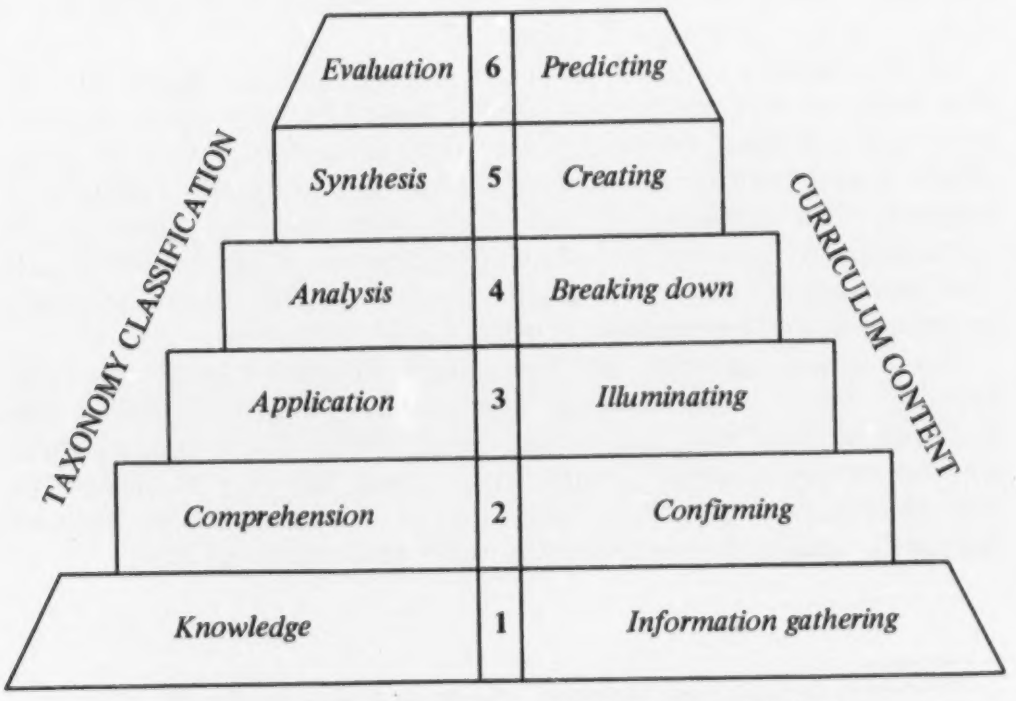

Figure 2. Classroom Emphasis for the Average Student

Chapter 3

The Science of Communication

In the new English curriculum, boys and girls will study the science of communication, dealing with ways in which the ideas of one person are transmitted to another individual or to other persons. The students will examine how messages can be sent and received, not only through modern electronics media but also through classical and popular literature.

At the present time, research in the field of communications is quite limited. Published work on the impact of electronic media, for example, is almost exclusively within the province of Marshall McLuhan. However, teachers attempting to involve students in the process of inquiry probably will find the lack of textbooks to be more of a challenge than a threat, for in a study of communications the total environment becomes the textbook.

Since there are no available textbooks covering verbal and nonverbal communications for grades seven, eight, and nine, certain broad, general principles are outlined here for the guidance of teachers.

Some Generalizations in the Field of Communications

William Albig has defined communication as "the process of transmitting meaningful symbols between individuals."[1] When one considers the variables implicit in each word of this definition, the wonder is that communication ever occurs!

Communication "Between Individuals"

The people involved in the communication process are the most variable element of all. Plato communicates with one type of audience, the Beverly Hillbillies with another. Each sender and each receiver of a message brings to the operation his own Pandora's box of attitudes and prejudices, educational backgrounds, and home situations. To cite just one example, a group of bright ninth-grade students were asked what message they received from the following "visual communicator":

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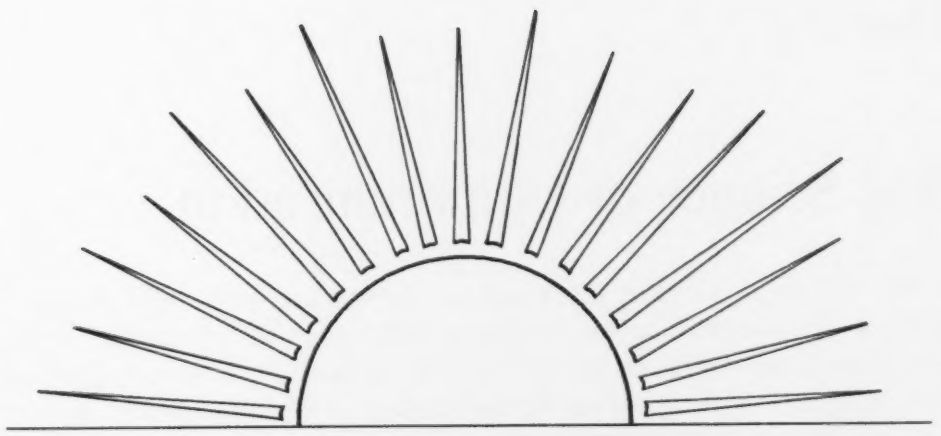
[1]William Albig, *Modern Public Opinion.* New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1956, p. 33.



For the majority of the class, this symbol meant "a rising sun." A minority saw it as "a setting sun." A few learners thought of "Japan" or "World War II" or "Pearl Harbor." For one individual, it meant "Benjamin Franklin."

One might ask, as did the teacher, "Benjamin Franklin? How in the world to you get 'Benjamin Franklin' from this picture?" The student was charmed at the opportunity to remind the teacher and the class of an early American legend wherein Franklin was said to have terminated a pre-Revolutionary meeting by calling the attention of the delegates to his chair, on which a design similar to this one had been carved. Franklin's concern? He wondered if the delegates' deliberations spelled the rising sun of a new nation or, possibly, a setting sun for their dreams.

Students who are studying communications must learn to recognize the variety of responses that are possible from receivers when a message is sent, no matter what the media. For example, the learners may wish to compare their own reactions to writers of the Romantic period versus writers of the modern age by using their own interpretations of visual communicators. The students will wish, first, to compare their reactions and, second, to discover why each reaction differs. One young person, working on a communications project, asked ten teachers and 40 students for their definitions of the word "several." For most teachers "several" meant "about five." For the majority of the students, "several" meant "three." One might well consider the implications of this communication gap.

"Meaningful Symbols" – Verbal and Nonverbal

While words are the symbols most often chosen to convey thought, the problem of semantics, or the development and changes in words and word groups, has absorbed scholars for centuries. Words

are treacherous symbols at best, as any person will verify who has had some innocent comment misinterpreted by listeners or readers.

Today's students live in an era when worldwide television is more than a possibility. The synchronous satellites are "up there." All that is needed now is a sponsor. Students may decide, along with the ancient Greeks, that a picture is worth a thousand words when sponsors, individually or in groups, attempt to break the language barrier and send their messages by means of other-than-language symbols.

The Beatles, popular singing idols of the 1960s, appearing on their first worldwide television show, chose a refrain with the not-too-inspired lyrics (as some people described them) of "Love, love, love – All you need is love," which they repeated again and again. Not inspired? On the contrary. Those very astute young men had chosen the one English word which would probably reach most listeners, regardless of the language they spoke. In brief, the Beatles had identified a meaningful symbol.

Despite successful efforts in the communications field, one cannot overlook the fact that the world of the twentieth century has a Tower-of-Babel aspect: at least 2,500 languages can be identified. The value of using meaningful sight and sound symbols, therefore, cannot be overemphasized for modern students of communication. As they develop their understanding of how messages may be sent visually and aurally, students will become more discriminating as to their own reception of such messages.

According to Marshall McLuhan, the medium of the radio provided the "tribal drums" that carried Hitler to power.[2] The hypnotic quality of Der Fuehrer's voice, as he chanted and rechanted certain catchphrases, is undeniable even by listeners who do not speak German. Students should listen to some of the available tape recordings and phonograph records of Hitler's speeches, as well as to those of Winston Churchill and Franklin D. Roosevelt, in order to discern the powerful effects of voice quality, word choice, and emotional tone.

(*Author's Note:* As this material is being readied for the press, my freshman English classes are listening to selected records and tapes of the sort recommended here. One imaginative boy has prepared a stereophonic tape that is profoundly moving. On one track are the Beatles, singing the number described in this chapter. On the second track the student has recorded sounds from the Hitler youth era by using audio materials in his own library at home. As the tape

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[2]H. Marshall McLuhan, *Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man.* A Signet Book. New York: New American Library, Inc., 1964, p. 260.

revolves, an anonymous German leader shouts, "Sieg Heil!" and thousands of youthful voices thunder back the response "Sieg Heil!" in perfect rhythm. Now that the boy is playing both tracks together for the classes, we are making the chilling discovery that the two are synchronized! The haunting screams from Germany in the 1930s join, with macabre precision, the beat in the closing portions of the Beatle number.)

Spoken words carry messages that are completely different from those conveyed by written words. In medieval times and before the advent of the written word, messages were often couched in poetry so that listeners could recall them more easily. It has been said that Senator Everett Dirksen's widely acclaimed oratory was largely a result of his almost poetic delivery.

To amplify the differences between spoken and written messages, students should be asked to write two versions of a given report – one for readers and a second for listeners. To assure effectiveness, the styles must vary. In the reader-oriented version, more facts and background information can be included, since the reader has the opportunity to reread and to ponder.

By contrast, listeners will "get the message" best when the speaker states his message and then repeats his primary points. Written words exist in space and can be reexamined; but spoken words exist in time and, once spoken, are gone. The speaker must provide for his listeners, then, their opportunity to ruminate by restating the essence of his message.

Today's television commercials provide the tribal drums that lure the public into making certain purchases. While the visual portion of the commercial is the eye grabber, the sound and the rhythm remain with the viewer longer. The effects are obvious when one hears some earnest kindergarten child humming a popular tune from a TV commercial as he digs in the sand or stacks his blocks.

Let us also consider the implications for teenagers when their own tribal drums are the sounds emanating from their transistor radios.[3] The great adolescent migration to San Francisco in the summer of 1967 was caused, at least partially, by a catchy little "pop" song which the true radio aficionado could hear perhaps ten or a dozen times a day during April and May. The lyrics said, "If you're going to San Francisco, be sure to wear a flower in your hair."

Henry David Thoreau once said, "If a man does not keep pace with his companions, perhaps it is because he hears a different drummer. Let him step to the music which he hears, however

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[3] *Ibid.*, p. 263.

measured or far away."[4] Even Thoreau might hesitate before urging the children and youth of this land to step to some of radio's tribal drums. The young people themselves *must* become aware of the potential – for good or for evil – that is inherent in the insistent drumming of their transistors. Examination of radio's messages in a laboratory situation may change a student's reception of such messages. Youth can be exposed to the power that radio has politically by listening to a leader's words and to the effect that radio has on the buying habits of the public by listening to and evaluating commercials. Certainly education will be more relevant to young people if they can evaluate messages relayed by so familiar a communications source in their daily lives.

"The Process of Transmitting"

The whole problem of encoding and decoding aural or visual symbols is crucial to understanding the process of transmitting a message. Gordon McCloskey recently prepared a diagram concerning one-way communication.[5] The following is an adaptation of his diagram:

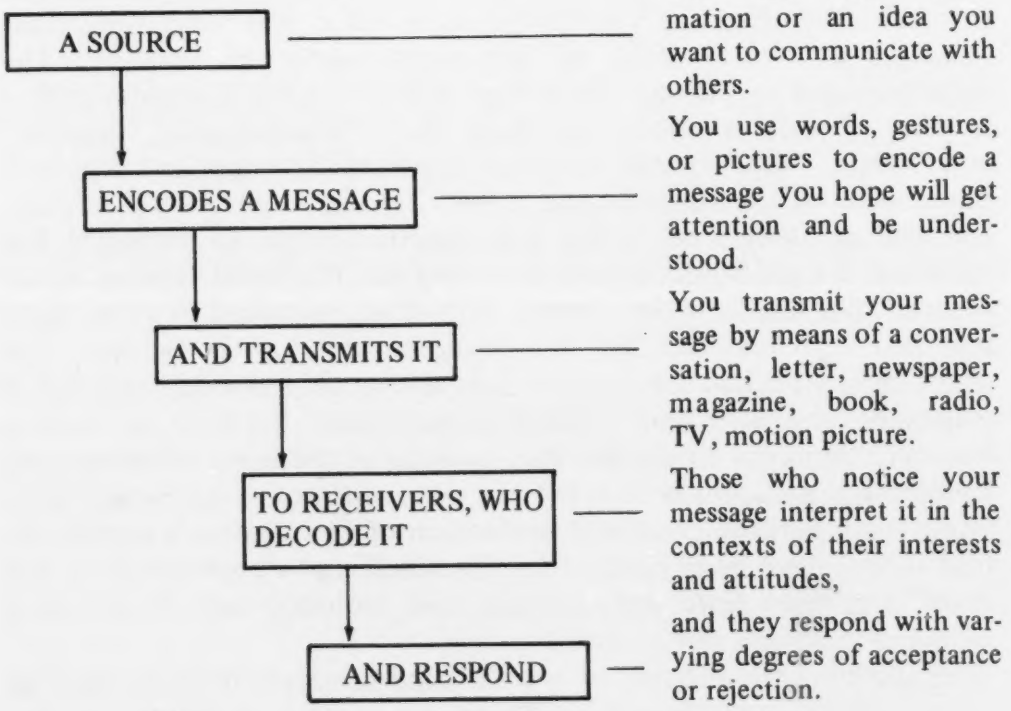
A SOURCE
You have some information or an idea you want to communicate with others.
ENCODES A MESSAGE
You use words, gestures, or pictures to encode a message you hope will get attention and be understood.
AND TRANSMITS IT
You transmit your message by means of a conversation, letter, newspaper, magazine, book, radio, TV, motion picture.
TO RECEIVERS, WHO DECODE IT
Those who notice your message interpret it in the contexts of their interests and attitudes,
AND RESPOND
and they respond with varying degrees of acceptance or rejection.

Figure 3. Graphic Conceptualization of One-Way Communication

[4]Henry David Thoreau, *Walden*, XVIII.

[5]Gordon McCloskey, *Education and Public Understanding* (Second edition). New York: Harper & Row Pubs., 1967, p. 69.

In his book, *Education and Public Understanding,* McCloskey makes the following observation:

> If you successfully transmit your message – and that is a big "if" – a receiver will *notice* it, give it *attention,* and *interpret* it as you intended. But – and this is also a big "but" – before your message has meaning to the receiver, he must *decode* the words or pictures he hears or sees and *interpret* their meaning. . . . The possibility that a receiver will interpret a message differently than the sender intended it is always large.[6]

Ghetto children, who commonly speak one form of English in their homes and are expected to communicate in another form at school, often have problems decoding a message spoken in standard English by their teachers. In effect, they must become as bilingual as the Mexican-American children whose parents talk to them in Spanish. "Street-Negro," the language used by many disadvantaged boys and girls outside their classrooms, has a distinct grammatical structure all its own, and the vocabulary varies in meaning even though the same words are used in standard English. The extent of the possibilities for message interference is incalculable.

Recently, in an Upward Bound program at Marymount College, Palos Verdes Estates, California,[7] the class was discussing how messages are transmitted by individual styles of walking. The disadvantaged junior and senior high school female students listed a number of walking styles, including "old," "discouraged," "happy," and "sexy." One gentle creature ingenuously suggested "pimp." Since none of the students had previously used such a word in class, the teacher asked her what she meant. Unable to verbalize her meaning, the girl stood up and demonstrated the bland saunter of the typical "Big Man" of the streets, with thumbs tucked in a low-slung belt and with just the hint of a supercilious sneer on the face. The other girls, who had not giggled over the word when she had said it originally, chuckled and nodded in agreement. Now, if the teacher had been tempted to decode the meaning of the word from her own background and points of reference, she might have misjudged both intent and purpose. And any evaluation of the student's sophistication would have been colored by the teacher's interpretation of the word. (As time bore out, this girl was probably one of the most innocent members of the class.)

In studying the process of transmitting messages between individuals, students will discover that one-way communication, as diagrammed earlier, is not the only or the best way to communicate. In

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[6] *Ibid.*

[7] See Barbara L. Covey, "Tuning In and Turning On the Nonverbals," *American Education,* V (June-July, 1969), 9-11.

two-way communication the receiver must react before true communication can occur. McCloskey claims that the feedback provided by conversation, group discussion, or the exchange of letters can yield information about which gestures, words, or pictures have been decoded incorrectly. "When receivers talk back, smile, frown, argue, indicate interest, or fall asleep, you get tips about the effect of a message and about specific needs for re-encoding it," McCloskey points out.[8] Many gifted students need to be taught to *read* body gestures and mannerisms. Since most learners depend upon verbal clues for their information, nonverbal messages may possibly escape them.

Some ghetto children have schooled themselves not to show emotion. The faces they present to the world are noncommittal and impassive. "If I don't show it, you can't hurt me," they seem to say. Members of the experimental class for underachievers at Palos Verdes High School also presented this kind of stoic exterior.[9] Perhaps sensitive young people deliberately choose to appear uninvolved so that they will be hurt less. Psychologists tell us that the teenage desire to wear clothes "just like everybody else's" is basically a search for anonymity, or a facade behind which the individual may develop as he pleases. Do beards and long hair accomplish the same purpose?

Give-and-take dialogue and interaction with others, therefore, often mean challenges as well as benefits. Reciprocation calls for involvement, and it takes at least two to reciprocate. How can the human condition be bettered without communication?

An approximation of McCloskey's diagram of two-way communication[10] is shown on the next page.

The communications laboratories of the new English curriculum probably should include many mirrors, so that students can become aware of their own visible reactions – their own "feedback" (noted as step 4 in Figure 4) – to the messages being sent by the teacher or by other students. Unless there is feedback of some sort, whether verbal or visual, genuine communication has not occurred. A wall of mirrors, such as the type used in the dance studios of a well-equipped secondary physical education gymnasium, would be sufficient for the proposed laboratories.

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[8]McCloskey, *op. cit.*, p. 72.

[9]Barbara L. Covey, "Talented, Tongue-tied and Troubled," *Education Age* (3M Education Press, St. Paul, Minn.), IV (May-June, 1968), 35.

[10]McCloskey, *op. cit.*, p. 72.

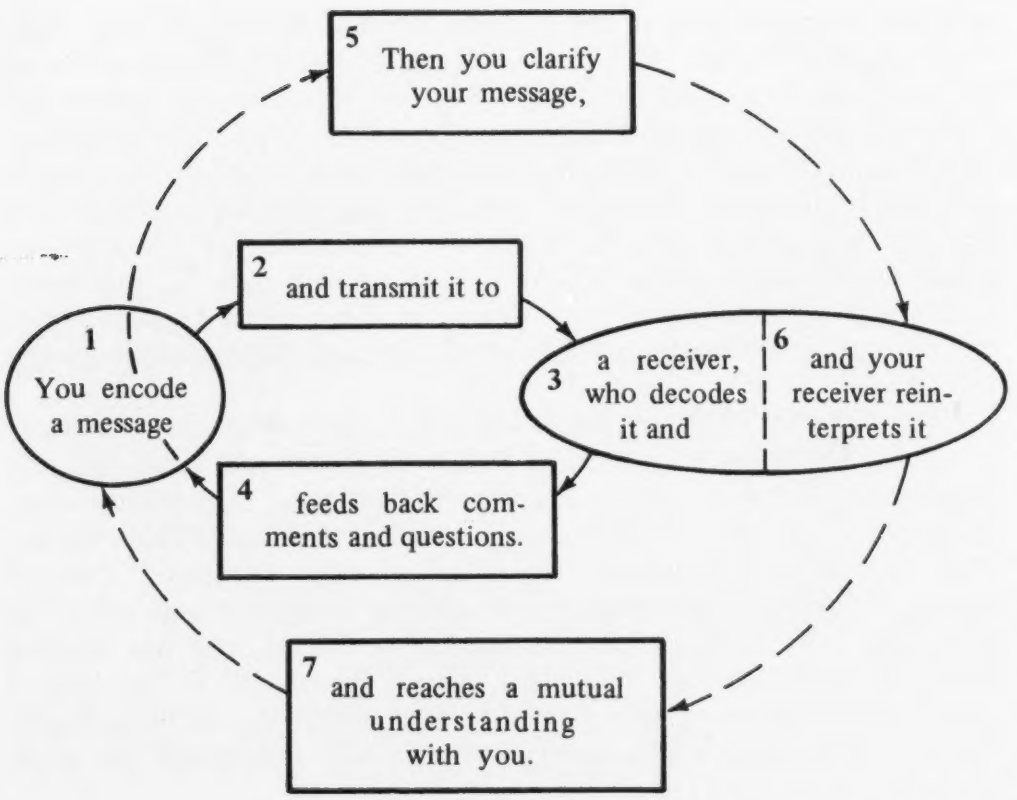
5 Then you clarify your message,
2 and transmit it to
1 You encode a message
3 a receiver, who decodes it and
6 and your receiver reinterprets it
4 feeds back comments and questions.
7 and reaches a mutual understanding with you.

Figure 4. Graphic Conceptualization of Two-Way Communication

Nonverbal Communication

Educational and psychological literature is just beginning to reflect concern for certain young people who are identified as nonverbal albeit performing, intuitive, creative, or inventive. Such individuals have particular problems encoding a message into words or decoding information from words, even though, according to standard reading tests, their reading skills are adequate or good.

Blythe Clinchy, commenting on the role of intuition in learning, notes that "our measure of a child's understanding of an idea is his ability to put that idea into words."[11] A child's inability to find words for his thoughts has important consequences in a classroom where words are the medium of cognitive exchange. She recommends that the teacher become an experimentalist and "set up situations where the child can be made to behave in such a way as to reveal his

[11]Blythe Clinchy, "The Role of Intuition in Learning," *NEA Journal,* LVII (February, 1968), 33.

conceptions. The child can be asked to build things, to draw things, to act things out."[12]

In the class for underachievers,[13] it was found that most students tested higher in the nonverbal battery of a group intelligence test than they did in the verbal battery of the same test. Only nine of 51 students identified as mentally gifted sophomores at Palos Verdes High School, where the special class was conducted, had similar testing results. Of those nine individuals, four were identified as candidates for the special program because of their relatively low grades in school. Since the class was filled before the entire class had been scanned, the following questions arise:

- Is it possible that the majority of nonverbal boys and girls are underachievers?
- Can we predict underachievement in school among young persons who have problems with encoding and decoding words?

A cursory examination of the nonverbal battery of the test reveals that it determines the students' abilities to see similarities and differences, to identify a pattern within a series, to predict the next step in the series, and to evaluate and choose the better of two or more correct answers. These skills are basically the same as those tested in a verbal examination of intelligence. However, there is a major difference. The verbal battery of this test uses words for setting up the problem, while the nonverbal battery uses figures and drawings.

Verbal and nonverbal batteries represent two separate dimensions in the structure of intellect and, regardless of the origin of the task, test completely different abilities. The point here is that teachers must be familiar with the different syndromes of giftedness. Teachers must recognize that the student who is gifted in handling concrete media (figural) can have the same IQ score as that of the individual who is not capable in this area of learning but who, on the contrary, is gifted in handling abstractions such as semantics or symbols.

Nearly 40 percent of the sophomore class at Palos Verdes High School tested higher in the nonverbal battery than they did in the verbal battery.[14] Guidance specialists are examining the possibility that most nonverbal students, whether gifted or nongifted, are doing less well in school than they might do if more were known about how to communicate with them and about how they communicate

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[12] *Ibid.*, 34.

[13] See Covey, "Tuning In and Turning On the Nonverbals," *op. cit.*, 10.

[14] *Ibid.*, 11.

with others. Art classes, music classes, the technical or practical arts, and science classes abound with students who perform well in situations where they can construct something to demonstrate their understanding of a concept. Frequently they perform less well when words are the means of communication.

If 40 percent of an entire grade level in a basically word-oriented community like Palos Verdes can be identified as nonverbal, the implications for less advantaged communities are almost boundless. Having had some experience with disadvantaged girls in the Upward Bound program, the author is of the opinion that many potentially talented young people are overlooked and their skills are undervalued because they communicate poorly with words.

Edward T. Hall, a leading anthropologist, reveals in his book, *The Silent Language,*[15] how people talk to one another without the use of words. His major thesis is that the culture of a country can be defined by its many systems of communication. He evolved this theory as a partial solution to communication problems encountered by Americans sent abroad to work in foreign countries. The anthropologist claims that any such representative of the United States not only should be taught to speak and write the language but also should be thoroughly trained in the nonverbal communication systems of the country in which he will live and work.

Hall avers that there are ten separate kinds of human activity, and these he calls "primary message systems," or forms of the communication process. They are interaction, association, subsistence, bisexuality, territoriality, temporality, learning, play, defense, and exploitation or use of materials. Words, whether spoken or written, make up an essential portion of only the first primary message system, interaction. The remaining nine systems are nonlinguistic forms of the communication process.[16]

The nonverbal language, or language of behavior, which exists in every country of the world, is at least as important as the verbal language. However, before a person can understand the nonverbal methods of communication used by peoples of another culture, he must recognize and know similar methods used by the people of his own country.[17]

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[15]Edward T. Hall, *The Silent Language* (originally published in Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1959). A Fawcett Premier Book. Greenwich, Conn.: Fawcett Publications, Inc., 1969.

[16]*Ibid.*, p. 45.

[17]*Ibid.*

Perhaps those students who can be identified as nonverbal are the very ones who have the greatest potential for dealing with members of societies less word-oriented than our own.

Aspects of communication that have to do with outlook, behavior, and the transmission of feelings are more significant than might be generally realized. For example, underachievers in the special class at Palos Verdes High School were keenly "tuned in" to the nuances of *how* a person speaks as contrasted with *what* he says. In an assignment concerning their reception of a teacher's "metalesson," or the message he or she sends unconsciously, they were asked to describe "the one teacher they were least apt to forget." The majority of the students reported certain messages sent by instructors quite unconsciously, such as "She liked me" – "He always yelled at me" – "She was always smiley-smiley, but I think she really hated kids." A contrasting group of achievers, commenting on the same assigned topic, reported such subject-oriented recollections as "He opened my eyes to the relationship between music and history" and "She started me writing poetry."

In another instance, the illusive quality of "heart," or understanding, or empathy was manifested among the nonverbal students in the Palos Verdes project and also among members of the Upward Bound program. Young people often refer to this quality as "soul."

The sensitivity that is present in many nonverbal young persons, while apparently of little value as far as "getting A's" is concerned, may be their greatest strength in fields other than that of school.

Mass Communication

Edward Hall's primary message systems, described previously, are based almost exclusively on person-to-person communication, whether transmitted by words or by actions. Indeed, the role of modern electronic communication media in the lives of students is no small matter, and educators cannot afford to underestimate it. In this era of radio, television, recordings, and other media, meaningful symbols can be transmitted to audiences that number tens of thousands. While this transmission might appear to be essentially one-way communication, such is not the case. Observers of the human condition have noted recently, among other things, that (1) the audience's reception of a message can be seen in its subsequent actions; and that (2) demands for involvement are predictable results of an audience's exposure to electronic media.

There is a world of difference between the modern home environment of integrated, electronically transmitted information and that of the traditional classroom. "Today's television child is

attuned to up-to-the-minute 'adult' news – inflation, rioting, war, taxes, crime, bathing beauties – and is bewildered when he enters the nineteenth-century environment that still characterizes the educational establishment," write McLuhan and Fiore.[18] These authors claim that adolescence has been made obsolete in our time. The need is critical that educators provide appropriate, relevant schooling for young people to whom the "real" world is a very large factor in their education.

The Educational Pendulum

Change is occurring too rapidly for teachers to wait for the traditional "swing" of the curriculum pendulum after the results of research and development on the part of specialists filter down to the classroom. Society must deal with a "collapse of time"; that is to say, changes in technology and society, once measured in 500-year intervals, now take place every 25 years.[19] Not so long ago, the swing of the educational pendulum could be predicted in work-lifetimes of the individuals involved; as the older generation retired or died off, younger people would initiate new ideas. Today's restless youth, however, claim that this is too slow a process.

Essentially, those teachers in the 1970s who were educated in a book- and word-oriented world must retool for instructional engagement with their media-oriented learners lest the former, like the dinosaur, become obsolete. Traditional classrooms in which information is scarce but ordered – in which knowledge is structured in fragmented, classified patterns, subjects, and schedules – are not appropriate to the needs of contemporary students. Educators must bridge from the traditional to a different sort of schooling for youth – to a type of education that utilizes the new technology in meaningful and constructive ways.

A total examination of communication in all its forms is essential if today's adults are to understand today's youth – if, indeed, today's young people are ever to understand themselves. The process of transmitting meaningful symbols between individuals, then, is a legitimate concern for the English curriculum.

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[18]H. Marshall McLuhan and Quentin Fiore, *The Medium Is the Massage: An Inventory of Effects.* New York: Random House, Inc., 1967, p. 18.

[19]See *Industrial Relations Newsletter.* El Segundo, Calif.: Hughes Aircraft Co., May, 1968.

Chapter 4

Communications Laboratories – Parameters, Sources, and Materials

Developing the sophisticated laboratories that are needed for student preparation of tapes, visuals, and films is costly. While teacher preparation of communication media for the purpose of conveying instructional messages is gaining increased acceptance, the number of student-oriented laboratories in the subject field of communications is relatively small. It is hoped that in the very near future such laboratories will become commonplace in the new English curriculum.

Student Use of Communication Media

An initial step toward involving students in the use of communication media is to secure media-centered libraries for the schools. Mrs. Flora Thoman, librarian at Miraleste High School in the Palos Verdes Peninsula Unified School District and ESEA consultant for the State of California, has set up two media-centered libraries and has helped to develop numerous others. She sees the communications laboratory as an extension of the media library. She reports, however, that a major problem in the use of media libraries is the lack of knowledge on the part of teachers and students on how to obtain the best service from such facilities. The establishment of classes in which students receive instruction, both in the philosophy of communication and in actually practicing communication by using instruments, equipment, and supplies, is essential before maximum use can be made of media libraries.

An article in the December, 1967, issue of *Audiovisual Instruction* describes the development of a mobile instructional materials unit that provides media, technology, and inservice teacher training for the schools of Southeast Alaska and serves as an extension of the Southeast Alaska Instructional Materials Center in Juneau.[1] The mobile unit was designed to bring the results of modern communication technology to teachers and students in widely scattered,

[1]Gaylen Kelley, Rex Taylor, and Ronald Bedard, "Educational Technology in Southeast Alaska," *Audiovisual Instruction*, XII (December, 1967), 1094-97.

inaccessible communities. Containing some of the most modern educational equipment, it features tape-duplication facilities and an extensive graphics production area. The early purchase of television video tape recorders, a viewfinder camera, and a helical scan recorder was anticipated at the time the article was prepared. Of special interest is the fact that this project is well adapted to the training of students in the use of communication media. The bus-like Juneau vehicle was designed by Gaylen Kelley and the Center staff and built by the Medical Coaches firm in Oneonta, New York. Judging from the positive educational impact of the Alaskan venture, many educators are in agreement that similar facilities are needed by all media teachers.

Simple Communications Laboratories

English teachers attracted by the field of communications are faced with this dilemma: While a majority of teachers may accept the principle that students should practice communication along with studying and talking about it, the equipment and supplies necessary for optimum accomplishment of given tasks are prohibitively expensive. However, a communications laboratory can be set up by any teacher of grade seven, grade eight, or grade nine with only a few more resources than those available to most teachers of self-contained elementary classrooms. Some of the needed supplies are easily acquired; for example, scissors, paste, butcher paper, colored pencils, crayons, scotch tape, masking tape, mending tape, construction paper, water-based tempera paints, and felt-point pens with inks of various colors.

Depending upon the machines and equipment available in the school, the media teacher will need tapes for the tape recorder, transparencies for the overhead projector, and other software necessary for student production of aural and visual messages.

Content and Skill-Building Activities

The following activities in a communications laboratory are recommended for the purposes of vitalizing course content and building essentials skills:

1. The development of a simple cut-and-paste scroll by the members of a class will demonstrate the principle that time is a function of this medium; in other words, during the process suggested, the students will see the relationship between the number of pictures needed and the amount of time it takes to show the scroll. It would be best if the scroll could be displayed by means of an opaque projector, which is available in many schools; but two

rollers and a puppet stage can provide a suitable viewing screen. Although a projector is desirable, it is not essential to the learning process.

2. Preparation of the sound background for such a scroll will reinforce the students' understanding of time as a function of message communication. Like music, the spoken word exists in time. Once said, the words are gone; only the receiver's impression of the message remains. Music and films are creations in time. The written word, in contrast, is structured in space, as are architectural designs and paintings.

3. Receivers of communicated messages will become aware of their own differences. Some are "hearing" (or aural) people. Others are "sight" (or visual) people. As students view the scroll and listen to the sound background, they will begin to distinguish between different modes of reception. Some members of the audience will be absorbed in seeing the message of the scroll; some will be caught up in listening to the message on the sound tape; and others will receive both messages with equal impact. It is important that students understand the particular way in which they learn and remember best, since this personal knowledge can benefit them in all academic areas.

4. By using a simple camera, a teacher can lead students to a more complete understanding of time-space-and-media concepts. The learners should be encouraged to take a series of slides on a given subject. As they work out the details of the allotted numbers of seconds necessary for showing the various slides, they will become aware that (a) elaborately complex visuals require additional time for audience perception; and (b) less complex visuals demand fewer seconds to convey their messages.

5. Students can use their television sets to discover for themselves the relationship between the extremely noncomplex arrangements of a TV commercial, which focuses on one girl and one message, such as "Her hair is prettier the closer you get to her," and the very complex images projected by a political convention in which many messages are struggling for visibility.

Critical Thinking

Students will discover, as they compare the 6 p.m. radio and television newscasts with their evening newspapers, that the television viewer and the radio listener are almost prisoners of the media. Their only option is to see and/or listen, or to turn off the radio and/or the television set. While the reader may choose certain portions of the newspaper which he cares to read, the viewer or

hearer must see or hear all of a program if he is to receive the parts he has chosen. The television news programmer has the awesome responsibility of selecting for hundreds of thousands of viewers the messages they will get. *His* news broadcast is composed primarily of headlines and features, whereas a newspaper containing such an abbreviated view of the world would sell poorly. Therein lies the principal difference between the media.

In essence, the media-oriented English teacher will be involved with his or her students in the very process of discovery. English teachers who wish to emphasize the role of media in the lives of their students will find some guidelines in current publications. An example follows:

The February 23, 1970, issue of *Time* remarked that a television series produced with a bitter black perspective and entitled "Bird of the Iron Feather" was the highest-rated local program in the history of Chicago's public television channel, WTTW.[2] The station showed 21 episodes during the winter of 1969-70. It would be well for students of communication media to examine critiques of "Bird of the Iron Feather" and to view the program if at all possible. As *Time* pointed out, the continuing theme may herald a new direction in black television.

According to the article, in many episodes white employers were parodied behind their backs, and recurrent talk of revolution was in the air. One black domestic was quoted as saying, "Wait till the slave maids and housekeepers take to the streets – and [those wealthy women] have to do their own dishes!"

Newton Minow, WTTW board chairman and former Federal Communications Commissioner, was reported to be highly favorable toward a continuation of the series and was quoted as observing that a major function of television should consist in giving people real opportunities to express themselves.

Students who are aware of the potency of such messages will not be candidates for propaganda and blind enculturation because, through a meaningful study of English, they will have been exposed to evaluation and critical thinking.

Concept-Challenging Questions and Issues

One of the messages most frequently received by adolescents originates in rock music. Frank Zappa, leader-composer for a musical group known as The Mothers of Invention, is an oracle-philosopher of the rock scene. Young people are listening to his message, and adults should listen as well.

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[2] "Soul Drama," *Time*, XCV (February 23, 1970), 59-60.

Commenting on "the new rock" in a summer, 1968, issue of *Life*, Zappa said: "Rock music is a necessary element of contemporary society. It is functional. It is healthy and valid artistically. It is also educational. . . . It has all the answers to what your mother and father won't tell you."[3] He went on to explore the reactions among listeners to sound, to the variety of drum beats, to eight-track recording. "Through rcok music," he submitted, "the audience is being exposed to an assortment of advanced musical and electronic techniques that five years ago might have sent them screaming into the street."[4]

One highly gifted but extremely antiestablishment fifteen-year-old boy declared recently that Zappa is effectively saying things which youth knows well and which adults must come to recognize sooner or later – the sooner the better. This boy should have an opportunity to discuss Zappa's article with an interested adult in a laboratory where mutual communication would allow the pair to examine some of the philosopher-musician's conclusions. Zappa himself would probably enjoy exposure to a knowledgeable, perceptive teacher. And there is little argument that this artist poses some excellent, creative questions which would bear some vigorous digging on the part of gifted boys and girls. Finding the answers would be a stimulating experience.

Zappa has asked, "Is it possible to modify the human chemical structure with the right combination of frequencies?"[5] In response, the laboratory teacher could guide the student to recent scientific reports disclosing that human hearing is altered by long exposure to high-decibel levels of sound similar to those contained in modern electronic rock.

And Zappa has wondered: "[Since] everything in the universe is composed basically of vibrations – light is a vibration, sound is a vibration, atoms are composed of vibrations – . . . all these vibrations just might be harmonics of some incomprehensible fundamental cosmic tone."[6] The teacher might introduce the student to Pythagoras, who, nearly 2,500 years ago, described similar hunches.

The antiadult, antieducation, antilaw, antireligion fifteen-year-olds who claim that school is dull and that many teachers are completely

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[3]Frank Zappa, "The New Rock – The Oracle Has It All Psyched Out," *Life*, LXIV (June 28, 1968), 82.

[4]*Ibid.*, 88.

[5]*Ibid.*, 91.

[6]*Ibid.*, 84.

"out of it" find support for their opinions if they do not have opportunities to discuss such questions and topics as these.

The philosophers of today may well be the Bob Dylans and the Frank Zappas and the John Lennons who are writing the lyrics of today's music. Patricia Coffin, discussing the Beatles in a recent issue of *Look,* has made the claim that they are the sound of *now,* the art beat of today. The issue is devoted to the contention that the contemporary art scene may be the beginning of an entirely new culture.[7]

If these statements are accurate, then being aware of the process of philosophy as it grows into a culture is an urgent subject for discussion among students who will inherit that culture.

Teachers may find that using the "discovery method" as it relates to methods of communication will initiate a student-teacher dialogue which will be beneficial to both in terms of understanding one another.

While the majority of their students will have read *Life* and *Look* articles, chances are that teachers will find relatively few young people who have read the *Saturday Review,* the *Atlantic,* or the *English Journal.* Yet these and other current magazines contain much pertinent information which media teachers will want to bring to a study that is concerned with the impact of communication media upon everybody's life.

The continuing "SR/Research" section of the *Saturday Review* reports on new developments in many fields, including science, the humanities, and human communication. In the September 7, 1968, issue, an article entitled "Public Policy and the Study of Man," from the magazine's science editor, seeks to answer the following provocative questions: "Does democracy need a new dimension in order to cope with scientific discovery and its technological consequences? Should a fourth branch of government be added to the existing triad?"[8] While John Lear's development may be somewhat too advanced for even the best readers in the seventh, eighth, and ninth grades, the concepts and ideas he presents should be included, desirably, in a study of communication.

In 1967 President Johnson established a special task force to make a comprehensive study of communications policy in the United States. The purpose of the study was to evaluate and assign priorities

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[7]Patricia Coffin, "Art Beat of the '60's," *Look,* XXXII (January 9, 1968), 32-41.

[8]John Lear, "Public Policy and the Study of Man: A Fourth Dimension for Democracy," *Saturday Review,* LI (September 7, 1968), 59-62. (The quotation is from a capsule summary of the article's theme and content; see page 2 of the issue.)

to conflicting interests, such as common carriers and space industry firms, government agencies, and commercial or noncommercial broadcasters. Actual message production, however, will be accomplished by a less glamorous group. The program directors and the technicians who will manipulate and program the messages to be projected in the near future are studying, right now, in the classrooms of America. These adults-to-be must have the opportunity in those classrooms to study the subject content and to attain the skills required. They must learn, during their initial development, the nature and degree of message reception – of the interaction that may be expected later between themselves and their viewing or listening audiences.

Communication Through Persuasion

Franklin Roosevelt once expressed the following view:

> If I were starting life all over again, I am inclined to think that I would go into the advertising business in preference to almost any other. This is because advertising has come to cover the whole range of human needs and also because it combines real imagination with a deep study of human psychology. Because it brings to the greatest number of people actual knowledge concerning useful things, it is essentially a form of education . . . It has risen with ever-growing rapidity to the dignity of an art. It is constantly paving new paths. . . . The general raising of standards of modern civilization among all groups of people during the past half century would have been impossible without the spreading of the knowledge of higher standards by means of advertising.[9]

The influence of television is demonstrated, even though negatively, by researchers who have laid partial responsibility for the increase of racial tensions at the door of television commercials. When ghetto residents are shown, at many intervals from morning till night, a glittering array of tools, services, and possessions they may never have, their resentment toward society is heightened, and the gap between the haves and the have-nots is widened. The role of advertising in affecting mankind's beliefs cannot be overestimated.

According to the report of the President's Commission on Civil Disorders, the majority of whites and many Negroes outside the ghetto have prospered during recent years to a degree unparalleled in the history of civilization. "*Through television* – the universal appliance in the ghetto – *and other media of mass communications,*" the report stated, "this affluence has been endlessly flaunted before

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[9]Franklin D. Roosevelt, as quoted in an advertisement by Magazine Publishers Association, *Atlantic,* CCXXII (July, 1968), 64.

the eyes of the Negro poor and the jobless ghetto youth."[10] (Italics supplied by the author.)

It is important that both senders and receivers of television messages be aware of the impact of this sort of communication upon ghetto residents in the United States, as well as upon the have-nots and the near-have-nots who view American television programs in the developing nations abroad.

Writing about television's role in that "carnival of excess," the political convention, Charles McDowell, Jr., contends in the July, 1968, *Atlantic* that while television coverage of conventions may seem disjointed and superficial, the only alternative would be to go to the people with a national presidential primary. In an age of mass media, such an action, he claims, would hand to television and radio an exorbitant power over the nomination. Wealthier candidates with style in their presentations would enjoy popular acceptance perhaps disproportionate to their presidential potential. Candidates with a knowledge of the power of communication media, and of the varying impact conveyed by the style of presentation, would be able to manipulate their audiences in ways similar to those used in the advertising field.[11]

David S. Broder, political analyst for the *Washington Post,* marvels at the power of politicians, including presidential candidates, to arouse the emotions of their audiences to great heights of intensity. He voices apprehension, however, over the ever-possible abuse of the gifts of persuasion and misuse of the media of communication. An audience can be turned into a crowd; a crowd can be transformed into a mob. Although many orators of integrity have served the nation well, there have been occasions when popular leaders have violated its heritage. Not unknown is the spectacle of a political agitator who manipulates his audience in such a way that the emotional response of his listeners is close to "that of a lynch mob – a pack of angry, frustrated men and women, who see [the speaker's] cause not just as a chance for victory, but as a guarantee of vengeance against all those who have affronted them so long . . . What strikes you about [such a person's] message . . . is its steady and repetitive incitement to violence."[12] It is not difficult to recognize the "tribal drums" technique in this kind of approach.

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[10]*Report of the National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders.* Otto Kerner, Chairman. Popularly known as "The Kerner Report." Edited by the *New York Times.* New York: Bantam Books, Inc., 1968, p. 204.

[11]Charles McDowell, Jr., "Carnival of Excess: TV at the Conventions," *Atlantic,* CXXII (July, 1968), 38-43.

[12]David S. Broder, "Wallace's Campaign," *Los Angeles Times,* August 22, 1968, Part II, p. 5.

The development, expansion, and sophistication of the media of mass communication have made notable strides in recent decades. Significant trends regarding the functions and the roles of these media were reported by Theodore H. White in *The Making of the President, 1960.*[13] The total message-communication potential for electronic media, nonetheless, cannot even be envisioned as yet. Certainly the elections of 1972 will be infinitely different from any that America has ever known.

Summary

Examination of society's broad-based enterprise of message-conveyance is most germane to an English program – to a curriculum that has concerned itself for centuries with the problem of how the ideas of one man get into the mind of another.

Media-oriented objectives for English instruction were reflected during 1968 in a variety of publications. Attention is invited particularly to the *English Journal* for April, 1968, wherein guidelines for the preparation of English teachers are listed.[14] The article containing the guidelines expresses strong concern over the lack of ability on the part of many persons to teach language, literature, and composition effectively. It is felt that an in-depth understanding of the world's language barriers is needed by teachers of English and that this understanding can be promoted by increasing the amount of African, Asian, and Latin American literature required in teacher preparation.

Further, the English teacher should be able to analyze and discuss the language used in various types of literature as well as the language used by such media as radio, television, newspapers, motion pictures, and the theater. He should have basic preparation in technical and expository aspects of composition, but he should explore, in addition, the creative and liberating functions of speaking and writing and seek to understand the relationships between these and other forms of expression, such as painting and pantomime. The English teacher also should know how to create or acquire, to utilize, and to evaluate significant instructional materials involving various media; the materials would include books of all kinds, films, kinescopes, tapes, phonograph records, slides, and programmed materials.

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[13]Theodore H. White, *The Making of the President, 1960.* New York: Atheneum Publishers, 1961.

[14]"English Teacher Preparation Study: Guidelines for the Preparation of Teachers of English – 1968," *English Journal,* LVII (April, 1968), 528-36.

The possibility of inductive teaching is greatly increased if there is a media laboratory fully equipped with every available instrument needed for message conveyance. Indeed, when a laboratory is available, English teachers can develop an initial curriculum that is focused upon communication. The best way that students can learn about communication inductively is by studying and applying communication units under the guidance of a teacher who is trained in communication media and by being surrounded by the appropriate facilities.

Reading and writing can no longer be the only major areas of emphasis in the English curriculum. Electronic media, which have brought about a resurgence in spoken communication, compel a reexamination of verbal communication in the classroom. Learning activities must be designed to provide experiences in which students can prepare tapes and films and can write scripts for and then produce plays or kinescopes. The process of making a single film with a sound-tape background can illuminate for young learners the communication role of motion pictures much better than viewing any number of professionally produced educational films. The media laboratory that emphasizes the dual role of sound and sight is an essential facility for promoting an inductive study of language in all forms of communication.

Chapter 5

Some Conclusions

The new English curriculum will have two concerns: (1) how students can be involved in the process of discovery; and (2) how students can be enabled to find their schoolwork relevant to their world and to the development of high-level skills.

Windows on the World

Father John M. Culkin, S. J., director of Fordham University's Center of Communications, observes: "Great Films and television, like great anything else, should communicate insights about man that we should want to share with each new generation."[1] In a variety of television and personal interviews, Father Culkin has identified today's mass communication media as *youth's windows on the world.* These windows have developed in their listeners and viewers a sixth sense, which is the sense of communication. Students need to learn how this development has come about, to build a better understanding of the modern media, and to use communications to greater and more lasting good.

Reflecting similar concerns, the *English Language Framework for California Public Schools* states that teachers must seek "constantly to enlarge the student's range of choices; to help him select purposefully what to say, to whom, and by what means; and then to show him that all these choices are shaped by himself, the situation, the medium, and the audience."[2] Making it clear that language is the chief unifying element in the discipline of English, the *Framework* also takes this stand:

> Mankind has recently emerged from a predominantly typographic culture, which tended to quiet the voice and produce the isolated writer or reader,

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[1] "Four Pundits Ponder the Frenzy," *Pace,* IV (October, 1968), 19. (In "Film Frenzy," a group of articles in that issue regarding American college students' experiments in movie making.)

[2] *English Language Framework for California Public Schools: Kindergarten Through Grade Twelve.* Prepared for the California State Board of Education and the California State Curriculum Commission by the California Advisory Committee for an English Language Framework. Sacramento: California State Department of Education, 1968, p. 17.

into a culture in which electronic inventions have reactivated the human voice and resocialized man in ways that we are just beginning to understand.[3]

All young people can profit from an examination of those inventions which have reactivated the human voice and resocialized man. For gifted boys and girls, especially, such studies are essential.

The *Framework* asks for no less than that the best possible English program be taught by dedicated, informed, enthusiastic teachers who will not allow English to become fragmented and peripheral or to be degraded to some humble service function. Such teachers would view the program proudly as the core of humanistic education.[4]

Charles Snow argues that Western society has become seriously fragmented and that men educated in different disciplines rarely have any meaningful communication. According to Snow, two "cultures" exemplify this problem – that of the literary intellectuals and that of the scientists.[5]

Perhaps the new English program, with its emphasis upon communication by means of any form of media, will help to break down the schism between technical science and the humanistic arts.

The availability of tapes, records, films, and other materials, including paperbacks and trade books, extends the capabilities of the English curriculum to the point of developing, both in the learner and in the teacher, a true understanding of communication. Multimedia materials can be valuable tools for curriculum development.

The Importance of Making English Studies Relevant

This monograph has been developed chiefly for the purpose of outlining certain specific directions to be taken regarding both techniques and content in the study of English usage. Students in grades seven through nine "want to see some advantage in their efforts."[6] These young persons demand relevance. Developing such relevance may be accomplished, first of all, through thematic or generic structuring based on significant works of literature. "Students [who] are now developing, sometimes painfully, a sense of their identity"[7] at these particular grade levels will find strength in the selection of books composed in many different times and places,

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[3]*Ibid.*, p. 8.

[4]*Ibid.*, p. v.

[5]Charles P. Snow, *The Two Cultures and a Second Look.* New York: Cambridge University Press, 1964.

[6]*English Language Framework for California Public Schools, op. cit.*, p. 36.

[7]*Ibid.*, p. 39.

about many types of human characteristics and situations, and by authors of different styles, temperaments, and attitudes toward the quality and meaning of experience. Secondly, these learners will find relevance in their studies if English is concerned with communication in all its forms and via all media. Discovery methods akin to those of the newer concepts of physical science courses can be introduced into the study of English by a continuing inquiry into the ways by which the ideas of one man are communicated to other men.

How the message is conveyed and *what makes up the message* are the two broad objectives of the new English program. All young people need to understand the *how* and the *what.* The gifted will bring to such studies their particular abilities to make finer judgments and to derive more meaningful understandings than would be expected of students with average potential.

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